



## **Frydenberg Budget Ignores Poverty and the Lessons of Christchurch**

The Ethnic Communities Council of WA (ECCWA) has welcomed some positive aspects of the budget such as the doubling of the tax offset for low to middle-income earners, the \$84 million that has been allocated to enable carers to take a break, the significant emphasis on infrastructure projects, \$461 million package for a youth mental health and suicide prevention strategy etc.

“We are thankful for these initiatives and for the budget speech avoiding inflammatory language on asylum seekers as well as ethnic and faith minorities. But the budget has ignored the dire need to address poverty and what we need to do to address the lessons of Christchurch” said ECCWA President Ramdas Sankaran.

“It is ironic that when ACOSS, most peak bodies including ours and the Business Council of Australia are on the same page to end the poverty that New Start and Youth Allowance recipients have been subjected to for 25+ years, our political leaders are clearly not. We therefore have to be very worried about where we are heading as a country in upholding the values we cherish and seek to promote. We praise the stance of the Hon. Senator Arthur Sinodinos who has endorsed calls for an increase in the rates of payment for the above and we urge all sides of politics to follow suit and end the unpardonable blight on our civil society”.

“Sadly they are not the only issues that have been ignored or not adequately addressed” said Mr. Sankaran in citing the following:

1. By 2022/23, the foreign aid budget will be 11.8 per cent lower in real terms than it will be in this year's budget.
2. The government has funded 10,000 new home care packages but this is woefully inadequate given the already lengthy waiting queue and in the case of CaLD communities they are ageing at a more rapid rate than their mainstream counterparts.
3. Budget makes no reference to multiculturalism and there is no assurance that the mindless mainstreaming which is rife in the mental health and suicide prevention areas, will not continue despite the fact that attempted and completed suicides have increased significantly within ethnic communities.
4. \$64.2 million is earmarked for so-called “social cohesion” measures such as funding for local sport, community languages, national community hubs and grants to encourage mutual understanding and celebrate diversity, which are most welcome.
5. This is by no means additional funding for the multicultural sector. Refugee support services have been dealt a \$77.9 million hit by Newly-arrived refugees now needing to wait one year instead of six months before they are required to access the Jobactive program.
6. The provision of \$39.5 million in 2019-20 to continue funding for the Regional Cooperation Arrangement (RCA) in Indonesia. ECCWA applauds this as it will assist Indonesia to effectively manage its asylum seeker population and facilitate safe/secure transfers to third countries prepared to provide permanent asylum.
7. There will be a 5.4 per cent increase to the visa application fee for almost all visa sub-classes from July which is estimated to generate an extra \$275 million over four years.

The NDIS has been shortchanged and that will account for a significant portion of the forecast budget surplus. CaLD and indigenous people with disabilities face more difficulties in accessing the NDIS than their mainstream counterparts. It is abhorrent that the NDIS has been allowed to languish,” said Mr. Sankaran.

“It is obvious that the multicultural sector has received the proverbial step motherly treatment when you consider the revenue/savings referred to in points 5 and 7 compared to new or expansion in programs/services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.”

“The Eradication of Red Fire ants, Yellow Crazy Ants and the Argentine Ants (\$27.5 million) is critical but much more so is the eradication of the white extremism that is white anting the social cohesion and potentially putting at risk the lives and wellbeing of ethnic and faith minorities in Australia. So why are we not equally concerned about it? Do we need another Christchurch incident before we act”, asked Mr. Sankaran?

“We need a National Multiculturalism Act and a comprehensive and adequately funded National Anti-Racism Strategy and we need them now”, said Mr. Sankaran.

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